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Allen Dulles Retires

The retirement of Allen W. Dulles as director of the Central Intelligence Agency is inevitably related in the public mind to some of the misfortunes that have befallen the CIA—for example, the shooting down of the U-2 plane over Soviet Russia and the Cuban fiasco. In a long public career there are certain to be many vicissitudes, however, and these should not be allowed to obscure long-range achievements. On the basis of his four and a half decades of public service Mr. Dulles is entitled to a generous salute from the American people. President Kennedy recognized this yesterday when he flew to the CIA headquarters to present the much-decorated Mr. Dulles with the National Security Medal.

Like his brother, the late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles grew up with a keen interest in foreign affairs. It seems to have been related to the fact that their maternal grandfather, John W. Foster, had been Benjamin Harrison's Secretary of State and an uncle, Robert Lansing, had been Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson. Allen Dulles joined the foreign service in 1916 and had a wide experience in many lands before he resigned to practice law with his brother. While he was in private practice he served as adviser or counsel to several international gatherings, and after the United States entered World War II his knowledge of European finances and strategic areas led to his association with the Office of Strategic Services.

As OSS director in Switzerland, Mr. Dulles learned of the German generals' plot to assassinate Hitler six months before the bomb went off without achieving its intended purpose. He was also credited with maintaining an agent in the Nazi Foreign Office and with engineering a revolt in Italy that gave the Allies a notable advantage. It was natural that, after the war, he should be summoned to Washington to head a three-man team to study the United States intelligence system. He was also a member of the Committee on the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery. President Truman brought him back to Washington as deputy director of the CIA, which he had helped to establish, and in 1953 President Eisenhower made him director.

Through his numerous assignments Mr. Dulles has demonstrated a large capacity for objective judgment. It has been said of him that, while Foster was master of the deadpan, he is master of the smile. Whether or not this is accurate, he has willingly undertaken some extremely difficult tasks and has brought to them dedicated effort and balanced judgment, qualities still needed in the CIA as it now strives for more efficient organization and better checks against error.